

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ATHENS 05203 111222Z

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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O P 111130Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9551

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 5203

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GR, US, TU

SUBJECT: BITSIOS COMPLAINS ABOUT ALLEGED STATEMENTS BY
US "OFFICIALS" CONCERNING AID TO TURKEY

1. FOREIGN MINISTER BITSIOS TELEPHONED ME EARLY THIS AFTERNOON IN A QUITE AGITATED STATE TO COMPLAIN ABOUT STATEMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO "US OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON". HE SAID THAT "VERY RELIABLE SOURCES"--HE DID NOT TELL ME WHO--HAVE INFORMED HIM AND PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS THAT US OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN SAYING IN WASHINGTON THAT PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS "HAS NO OBJECTION" TO THE RESUMPTION OF US MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO TURKEY. HE SAID THAT CARAMANLIS WAS "UPSET" BY THIS AND WANTED HIS CONCERN CONVEYED TO WASHINGTON AT ONCE.

2. BITSIOS SAID THAT AS HAS BEEN REPEATEDLY MADE CLEAR TO US OFFICIALS, INCLUDING DURING THE SUMMIT MEETINGS IN BRUSSELS, NO GREEK GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL CAN BE EXPECTED TO SIGNAL IN ANY WAY THAT HE IS IN FAVOR OF OR INDIFFERENT TOWARDS US MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO TURKEY. HE SAID HE AND CARAMANLIS HAVE DONE THEIR UTMOST TO AVOID ANY PUBLIC STATEMENT WHATEVER ON THE MATTER AND HAVE TAKEN THE POSITION THAT THIS IS AN INTERNAL QUESTION IN THE US. HOWEVER, THE GREEK GOVERNMENT CANNOT ALLOW US OFFICIALS TO APPEAR TO BE SPEAKING FOR THE GREEK GOVERNMENT OR TO CHARACTERIZE
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PAGE 02 ATHENS 05203 111222Z

THE VIEWS OF PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS INCORRECTLY.

IN ANALOGOUS CIRCUMSTANCES LAST DECEMBER, HE REMINDED ME, THE GREEK GOVERNMENT FELT COMPELLED TO ISSUE A STATEMENT --BECAUSE OF DOMESTIC PUBLIC OPINION IN GREECE AND PARLIAMENTARY CRITICISM--SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT AND AFFIRMING THAT WHILE THIS WAS AN INTERNAL MATTER IN THE US, THE GREEK GOVERNMENT WAS NOT INDIFFERENT TO ITS OUTCOME. BITSIOS SAID THAT HE HOPED THE REPORTED REMARKS BY US OFFICIALS WERE UNFOUNDED BECAUSE OTHERWISE THE GOG MIGHT BE FORCED TO ISSUE SOME KIND OF STATEMENT ON THE SUBJECT AGAIN.

3. I TOLD BITSIOS THAT I HAD NOT SEEN OR HEARD ANYTHING TO INDICATE THAT USG OFFICIALS WERE ENDEAVORING TO CHARACTERIZE THE POSITION OF CARAMANLIS OR THE GREEK GOVERNMENT ON THIS MATTER. I URGED HIM NOT TO BE PRECIPITATE IN SAYING ANYTHING ON THIS SUBJECT BECAUSE IT COULD EASILY BE MISUNDERSTOOD AND COMPLICATE AN ALREADY EXTREMELY DIFFICULT SITUATION. BITSIOS SAID THAT HE WANTED TO AVOID HAVING TO ISSUE ANY STATEMENT BUT THAT THIS WOULD DEPEND ON FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS AND THE REACTION HERE. AFTER ALL, HE SAID, WHAT CAN WE DO? ONLY A FEW DAYS AGO, PRIME MINISTER DEMIREL MADE A PUBLIC STATEMENT TO THE EFFECT THAT THE ISLANDS IN THE AEGEAN DID NOT BELONG TO GREECE BUT HAD ALWAYS BEEN PART OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE. "THE GREEK GOVERNMENT CAN HARDLY BE INDIFFERENT TO LEARN THAT ARMS MAY ONCE AGAIN BE SENT BY THE US TO A COUNTRY WHERE SUCH ARMS MAY LATER BE USED AGAINST GREECE THE WAY THEY WERE USED AGAINST GREEK CYPRIOTS," HE SAID.

4. COMMENT: I DO NOT KNOW THE SOURCE OR SOURCES OF BITSIOS' INFORMATION BUT I CAN THINK OF SEVERAL POSSIBILITIES. I HOPE AFTER ALL WE HAVE BEEN THROUGH WITH CARAMANLIS, BITSIOS AND OTHERS ON THIS POINT THAT NO USG OFFICIALS ARE PRESENTLY TRYING TO CHARACTERIZE THEIR VIEWS AS BITSIOS HAS SAID, OTHERWISE WE MAY BE FACED WITH ANOTHER ANGRY GREEK GOVERNMENT DENIAL OR CLARIFICATION THAT WOULD COMPLICATE MATTERS IN WASHINGTON. AT THE SAME TIME, I DO NOT EXCLUDE THAT BITSIOS RAISED THIS THE WAY HE DID AS A PRECAUTIONARY DE MARCHE IN ORDER TO REMIND US OF THE GREEK GOVERNMENT'S POSITION AND TO HEAD OFF ANY CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 ATHENS 05203 111222Z

POSSIBLE IMPRUDENT STATEMENTS BY USG OFFICIALS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY ASSISTANCE, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, DIPLOMATIC PROTESTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 JUL 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975ATHENS05203
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750240-0220
From: ATHENS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750762/aaaaccwu.tel
Line Count: 109
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 APR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 APR 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <24 APR 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BITSIOS COMPLAINS ABOUT ALLEGED STATEMENTS BY US "OFFICIALS" CONCERNING AID TO TURKEY
TAGS: PFOR, MASS, GR, US, TU
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006